

**Historic District Commission
Town Hall, Room 126
Final Meeting Minutes, February 10, 2015**

Meeting called to order at 7:00 PM. Attending Kathy Acerbo-Bachmann (KAB), David Foley (DF), David Honn (DH), Pamela Lynn (PL), Ron Regan (RR) Anita Rogers (AR).

Absent: David Shoemaker (DS) and Mike Gowing as BofS rep.

7:00 PM Citizens' Comments and Questions

AR shared that she had received an email from Steve Su concerning the ongoing window issue.

DS could not be present this evening and so the question about 14 Newtown Rd. will be deferred.

7:05 PM Approved Minutes by Consent: January 13, 2015

7:06 PM Town Meeting 2015 – Status on Zoning Articles

KAB asked DH whether he was ready to bring forward language on signage and zoning issues.

DH had met for three hours with Kristen Guichard, Mike Gowing and Scott Kutil who suggested the possible solution of putting footnotes into the table of dimensions. Roland Bartl was concerned whether that approach would affect the consistency of zoning in the district. SM retained a lawyer who has indicated that the footnote approach was not appropriate.

The lawyer suggested creating a district overlay zone or approaching the concerns through a change in the HDC bylaw concerning FAR and building height. It would require a 2/3 vote of TM. To accomplish this HDC will need to be ready to review the language of these two articles – signage and zoning, specifically FAR and building height at the next

HDC meeting .

KAB asked how these changes would affect hammerhead lots. She reminded the commission that much of the initial impetus for these zoning proposals was to address concerns about hammerhead lots. KAB outlined how much work needs to be done to bring the language forward to TM.

Relevant issues include taking the existing language about satellite dishes out of Rules and Regs and putting new language concerning satellite dishes into the bylaws. The definition of lighting needs to be expanded while clarifying that HDC does not allow internally lit signs. The language should go beyond neon signs by adding others that are not allowed. Window signs will be allowable, either painted or stenciled letters but no vinyl.

AR asked whether there should be an effort to describe permissible stenciling.

KAB indicated it was not necessary but that signs would still need to be accepted by the regular HDC process.

7:21 PM Update on 90 School St.

The lot has been purchased by a developer and who would like to buy the property behind it comprised of five acres abutting Great Hill and the South Acton Historic District.

The Open Space Committee will be meeting to consider the issue.

KAB moved that HDC assign David Honn to attend an upcoming meeting and express HDC's unanimous support to the Open Space Committee to purchase the parcel at 90 School St. Seconded by RR and accepted unanimously.

7:29 PM Application 1502 - 80 School St. Window (Skylight) and Roof

Discussion of the issue was deferred until the applicant could arrive.

7:30 PM Update on Traffic Report

DH reported on the recent Acton Traffic Committee meeting. The presenter, Joe SanClemente, who had met with HDC at its last meeting mentioned many of the concerns brought up by HDC.

Of the several intersections the one at Newtown Rd and Concord Rd. is the most dangerous. Currently the majority of drivers are traveling at about 40 mph. Visibility is a serious issue. The consensus of the participants was that the primary need was to slow traffic. As an alternative DH suggested getting rid of the intersection entirely.

The landscape architect was present for the meeting.

The next step will be to formulate proposals based upon input to date.

7:37 PM Application 1502 - 80 School Street (Skylight) and Roof

KAB inquired about the specifics of the application in order to determine whether a CNA would be appropriate. RR indicated that the skylights might be visible from the public way.

The applicant will be switching from an asphalt shingle to an architectural shingle requiring a COA, whereas the skylights will be a CNA.

7:45 PM Discussion of Windows, Previously called West Acton Village Ecology Project, 525-531 Massachusetts Avenue

In response to a citizen question KAB confirmed that the windows installed are the ones accepted by HDC.

746 PM Application 1501 - 40 School St. Historic Plaque

PL shared the owners' communication that locations either above the front porch or on the right side of the front of the house would be acceptable to them.

PL moved to accept the location on the front of the house at the right side

by the cornerboard at a suggested height no higher than the top of the first floor bay window casing.

Seconded by RR. Accepted unanimously.

The HDC suggested commenting on the white area above the door. It would look more historically accurate if painted yellow to match the rest of the house.

7:56 PM Application 1503 - Temporary Sign, Acton Women's Club, 540 Main Street.

AR recused herself and left the room.

Julie Ivanov and Carolyn Kilpatrick represented the AWC. The BofS had requested that the HDC comment on the proposed sign. The presenters brought an example of the desired sign. It would be made of the same material as the temporary signs hung above Main St. Bunting will also be hung.

KAB asked how it would be hung and CK explained there will be grommets and will be hung from hooks.

DH suggested using the Caslon font previously used for the sign on Meeting House Hill nearby.

DF inquired about the alternate proposal of a dark background. He favored that option but they had already found it difficult to read. He also asked about potential damage from the hooks.

PL supported the font substitution.

KAB suggested making the three lines slightly differing in size. If the lines are different sizes, they are likely to be read separately. If all are the same size, they will tend to be read as a unit.

KAB moved to recommend to the BofS use of the Caslon font, dark lettering on a white background, and a change in the sizing of the three

lines so the 100 Years will be smaller by two points, AWC kept same size, and 1915 – 2015 increased in size by two points.

HDC will forward a memo to the BofS explaining its recommendations.

8:16 PM Application 1502 - 80 School St. continued

Michaela Moran, the applicant, joined the conversation.

The group found the Landmark shingles to be preferable to the Timberlane sample.

The proposed skylights will have a slightly different finish as the originals are no longer made. The height will be the same and the dimension of the new skylight is designed to fit into the existing framing of the original skylight. The commission finds that the replacements are reasonably within the limits of replacement in kind and a Certificate of Non-Applicability will be granted for the skylights.”

RR moved to accept Application #1502 to reroof 80 School St. using Certainteed Landmark designer shingles, no ridge vent and drip edge finished to match the trim pending abutter notification.

8:28 PM Application 1504 - 81 River Street Fence

Without a copy yet of the application, HDC deferred discussion of the application until the next meeting.

8:29 PM Steve Su and Window Issue 18-20 School St.

The owner has requested that he be able to reinstall the windows that were previously taken out and replaced without permission.

AR explained that removal of the sashes normally requires taking out the working parts. In this case it was likely 1960s mechanical elements which were removed.

KAB rephrased the issue theoretically and suggested the question

should be forwarded to Frank Ramsbottom to insure that this solution would be permitted by the Building Department.

Theoretically AR accepted the solution but added that practically it is unlikely to be completed. Others leaned toward accepting this proposal although it would make use of an inferior solution.

DF suggested if the windows returned to “status quo ant,” then the time schedule would no longer be valid.

KAB will put the topic on the next agenda and AR will check with FR.

8:40 PM Preliminary Review of Proposed Addition to 29 Windsor Ave.

RR recused himself as an abutter.

Tom Peterman representing the owner described the plan as a modest project in a sensitive location. It was his intention to preview what he and the owner have been working on to date.

The existing structures include a modest home built about 1847 with some additions over time including a dormer and an ell.

A small garage probably built in the 1920s is at a distance behind the house. The owner wishes to achieve a first floor BR and an attached garage. The plan is to preserve what is currently in place.

The proposed plan includes a single story addition off the mud room with a two car garage and BR off the back. A modified deck will not be visible from the street.

The placement of the septic system at the back of the property drives a good deal of the planning. The current garage would be kept as a shed.

The elevation drawings indicated no changes to the existing front of the structure.

AR asked whether the garage would be flush with the mud room and it is proposed to be.

DH asked about the location of home of the abutter to the west. His concern focused on the earlier suggestion to put the garage doors on the side of the addition. With regard to the garage doors DH suggested to making them the least prominent possible, perhaps placing them in the shadow line. Considering the cupola, it accentuates the garage. Perhaps dormers would be preferable to the cupola or perhaps neither would be best.

DF preferred no cupola because it detracts from the balance of the entire structure. Landscaping might help. Dormers would not be preferable.

DH might put more emphasis on the trim on the addition to reflect the significance of the trim on the existing building.

AR would prefer the simplicity retained without adding a cupola and would make the garage not be flush with mud room. She would increase the emphasis on the trim but step it down a bit from the original house.

If the garage is to look like an out building, then the windows are not appropriate to a barn. She wondered about external ramps and the presentation of the garage doors which appeared to her to be one door rather than two separate doors.

DH thinks that there needs to be a bit more "quirkiness"

PL was impressed with the plan's success in responding to the desires of the owner while respecting the spirit of the existing structure and its environment. She supported the prior suggestion to increase the impact of the trim and to remove the cupola.

KAB is basically in agreement especially concerning the garage doors being placed to the side. Maybe the cupola would be acceptable if the windows were changed to increase a feeling of irregularity.

Brad Botkin of 53 Windsor Ave. thinks it is a beautiful plan but would also suggest eliminating the cupola.

RR speaking as a citizen has only one comment agreeing with other

comments that the cupola doesn't seem appropriate in this situation. Citing that the large carriage house at 56 Windsor Ave. is the only structure with a cupola on the street.

Rene Robbins of 53 Windsor Ave. is not convinced about the garage doors being located on the side is best because she is thinking about the impact of an expanded driveway. She would like to see alternatives. She agrees that the plane of the mud room should not be the same as the garage.

9:12 PM Moved to adjourn.

Respectfully submitted,

**Pamela Lynn
HDC Secretary**